



# Withering



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## Chapter 1 by PyromaniacSoap

John knew he was going to die from the moment that his hand did. It had been withered looking and black for a week now and it wasn't getting better. The world, now controlled by the terrorist group, Scorpius, was rapidly wasting away. The land was dead, the trees were dead, even the people were dying. It always stared with an extremity, the hands, feet, ears, they were constantly in danger from the plague. The plague was airborne, water born, and body-born. Life, as he knew it was going to end.

## Chapter 2 by Zoriex



But he couldn't bring himself to panic. After all, he had always known in the back of his mind that he'd eventually die sooner rather than later.

Ever since Scorpius had come into power a few years ago in early November on John's birthday, it had been obvious that the decay and death that followed had been because of them. No one knew how or why, but it was speculated that the Plague had come with Scorpius because they'd been the ones to make it. It was rumored that in order to take over North and South America along with half of Europe, the leaders of the terrorist group had threatened to infect the continents with an incurable disease after fighting decades long wars with against them.

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Yet it seemed that members of the Scorpius were somehow immune to it.

A sudden loss of the stinging pain in his forearm from the needle of the failed drug that had been injected into him made John look down. The rot had begun to speed up. It now covered half his forearm.

John sighed as he shook his arm a bit, trying to see if he could return at least a little feeling back. Nothing happened. He couldn't move his fingers or wrist no matter how many times he tried. It made daily life a bit harder to manage, even though thoughts of his nearing death lingered in his mind.

### Chapter 3 by Miriam



After much deliberating, he knew he then had two decisions: wait and count out his final hours until death overtook his already-decaying life, or end it now, and relieve himself of the pain that was inevitably about to come. It was a choice that needn't have been considered.

Raising the knife from the sheath of a rotting corpse nearby (this seemed disturbingly standard where ever John had traveled, with the raged people ran about with weapons slaying everyone disrupting their desired path way, in fear that they were some terrorist in disguise), and raised it above his shoulder before reciting the one and only line he had ever taken to heart from the famous 'Romeo and Juliet'; 'there rust and let me die'!

A voice carried over the bodies, over the blood and over the gut-wrenching silence that followed all survivors, no matter how many people surrounded them.

'Stop.'

### Chapter 4 by Opulence



John looked up to see a bald man standing over him.

His hunched figure was bent over a cane and his baleful yet wizened eyes stared out at John from under a heavy brow. He wore an old uniform, so ancient and tattered it was now just an imitation of what it once was. From beneath his wrinkled face he spoke with a deep and sombre tone.

"The will be no need for that today"

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"Show me that arm of yours"

John raised his hand, revealing the blackened and cracked skin, flaking off into ash and dirt. It had covered his elbow now, within a day or two it would reach his heart and he would be dead. The old man inspected his arm and then with surprising speed, severed it.

The withered forearm fell to the ground, and was quickly covered with the blood draining from John's newly acquired stump. Unable to quite process this, John fell to his knees. John wasn't sure if it was the sudden loss of blood or just the shock of having lost an arm, but he was feeling rather light headed.

"Don't give out on me kid" grunted the old man as he attempted to support the weight of the now falling John. John felt the emptiness of sleep crawling in the corners of his vision. Before he knew it, he was unconscious.

John slept a dreamless sleep, one from which he awoke in an unfamiliar place, with the old man sitting across from him, buried deep in a book. He looked at his stump, the arm was gone, it wasn't all a dream. He looked at his watch on his remaining arm, he'd been unconscious for two days

"You're up? Good, try to keep it that way this time, and try not to move too much" he said without looking up. John hadn't remembered being awake since the amputation.

"How did you know that amputation would work?" questioned John.

The Old Man looked at him with a jovial smile and pulled up his trouser leg. He had a wooden leg, severed halfway up the calf, gnarled and worn much like its owner.

"Lets just say you don't get to my age without learning a few tricks" he said "Now, you and I have quite a bit to discuss".

Chapter 5 by Francis Alp



John sat there. He was going to say something but he hesitated. It suddenly began to dawn on him that maybe he wasn't going to die. Maybe there was a shoe for him to fill. But what...?

"Discuss? Discuss what? The world's going to hell in a handbasket, I'm missing my arm, and you...", he hesitated, again, "Who the heck are you?"

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He opened and closed his mouth, finding himself at loss for words. Finally all he could manage was a dumbstruck "Impossible...!!"

The girl smiled and said in cheery voice, "Well then, you know nothing...John Snow!!"

## Chapter 7 by Soulfire



Jon's eyes were dark, blank. This was a lot to process.

"My name's not John Snow," he said, stretching the words out. "I'm just John."

"No, you're not!" The girl with the fiery hair corrected him cheerfully. It wavered in the wind, a candle's flame dancing in the breeze. "My name's Ygritte, but that doesn't matter. What matters is that you know who you are."

She reached forward, towards Jon's stump. He took a hasty step backwards, keeping himself out of reach, but when she reached again he couldn't bring himself to step away. She hastily bound the stump with some cloth, nodding once at her handiwork before starting to walk away.

"Where are you going?"

"Valar morghulis. All men must die."

We are already dying, he thought wryly.

"And Scorpius is at the head of that list of men." Ygritte turned around, waving him forwards.

"Aren't you coming with me?"

## Chapter 8 by Dee



A sudden warmth dispersed itself inside John and he was suddenly very aware of the haziness of the world before him, as though it was shimmering in a searing heat. But the warmth inside John was like that of fireplaces at Christmas, after a dinner that had you on the verge of dozing off. He looked down and Ygritte was still smiling at him, her hand still on his shoulder, and he wondered if she could see what he was...

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plague, but varying on a much greater scale. Some would develop depression, or behavioural changes linked to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; some went into a state of delirium, others neurolepsy. In the case of the latter, sufferers would fall into deep slumbers where they'd dream vivid and evocative dreams, during which, they normally ended up withering away altogether. John had already accepted the fact that he was going to die, and, even if it was in a dream that was no more than the toxins of a fatal plague messing with the brain, he might as well die in the arms of a beautiful girl.

"Yeah," John said, recollecting strength. "I am."

And he moved to go towards her, his good hand outstretched, and the shock of a searing pain rippled through his arm. He thought for a second that the heat of the air had actually been as hot as it had seemed, or that he'd touched the flames of Ygritte's hair somehow, but then his eyes snapped open and he saw the flash of a fireplace in a dark and cold room. He'd been lying in front, and allegedly stuck his hand in it in his sleep.

"You fool," came the rasp of the old man as he dragged him away from the fire. "You want to get rid of your other hand, too?!"

John could only stare in bewilderment at the real nature of his surroundings.

**the end**

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